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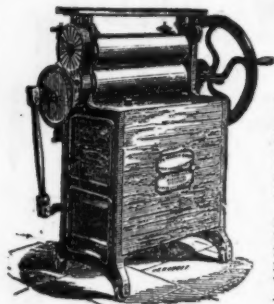
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CHAPTER XXXIX. FAREWELL MISS WARE.

I DO not mean to describe the terrible scenes that followed. When death comes attended with a scandal like this, every recollection connected with it is torture. The gross and ghastly publicity; the merciless prying into details; and over all the gloom of the maddest and most mysterious of crimes! You look in vain in the shadow for the consoling image of hope and repose; a medium is spread around that discolours and horrifies, and the Tempter seems to haunt the house.

Then the outrage of a public tribunal canvassing the agitations and depressions of "the deceased" in the house which within a few days was his own, handling the fatal pistol, discussing the wounds, the silent records of a mental agony that happy men cannot even imagine, and that will for life darken the secret reveries of those who loved the dead!

But as one of our proverbs, old as the days of Glastonbury, says:

Be the day never so long,
At length cometh the even song.

Mamma is now in her cape and widow's cap. I in my deep mourning also, laden with crape. A great many people have called to inquire, and have left cards. A few notes, which could not be withheld, of embarrassed condolence, have come from the more intimate, who thought themselves obliged to make that sacrifice and exertion. Two or three were very kind indeed. Sore does one feel at the desertions that attend a great and sudden change of fortune. But I do not, on fairly thinking it over, believe that there is more selfishness or less good

nature in the world in which we were living, than in that wider world which lies at a lower social level. We are too ready to take the intimacies of pleasure or mere convenience, as meaning a great deal more than they ever fairly can mean. They are not contracted to involve the liabilities of friendship. If they did they would be inconveniently few. You must not expect people to sacrifice themselves for you, merely because they think you good company or have similar tastes. When you begin the *facilis descensus*, people won't walk with you very far on the way. The most you can expect is a graceful, and sometimes a compassionate, farewell.

It was about a fortnight after poor papa's death that some law papers came, which understanding as little about such matters as most young ladies do, I sent, with mamma's approval, to Mr. Forrester, who, I mentioned, had been poor papa's man of business in town.

Next day he called. I was with mamma in her room at the time; and the servant came up with a little pencilled note. It said, "The papers are important; and the matter must be looked after immediately to prevent unpleasantness." Mamma and I were both startled. "Business," which we had never even heard of before, now met us sternly face to face, and demanded instant attention.

The servant said that Mr. Forrester was waiting in the drawing-room to know whether mamma wished to see him. She asked me to go down instead, which accordingly I did.

As I entered, he was standing looking with a thoughtful and rather disgusted countenance, as if he had something disagreeable to tell, from the window. He came forward and spoke very kindly, and

then told me that the papers were notices to the effect that unless certain mortgages were paid off, upon a certain early day, which was named, the house and furniture would be sold.

He saw how startled I was. He looked very kindly, and as if he pitied me.

"Has your mamma any relation, who understands business, to advise with under her present circumstances?" he asked.

"Chellwood, I think, ought," I began.

"I know. But this will be very troublesome; and they say Lord Chellwood is not a man of business. He'll never undertake it, I'm sure. We can try, if you like; but I think it is merely losing time and a sheet of paper, and he's abroad, I know, at Vichy; for I wrote to him to try to induce him to take an assignment of this very mortgage, and he would not, or said he could not, which means the same thing. I don't think he'll put himself out of his way for anybody. Can you think of no one else?"

"We have very few kinsmen," I answered; "they are too remote, and we know too little about them, to have any chance of their taking any trouble for us."

"But there was a family named Rokestone connected with you at Golden Friars?"

"There is only Sir Harry Rokestone, and he is not friendly. We have reason to know he is very much the reverse," I answered.

"I hope, Miss Ware, you won't think me impertinent, but it is right you should ascertain, without further loss of time, how you stand. There are expenses going on. And all I positively know is that poor Mr. Ware's affairs are left in a very entangled state. Does your mamma know what balance there is in the bank?"

"How much money in the bank?" I repeated. "Papa said there was fifty pounds."

"Fifty pounds! Oh, there must be more than that," he replied, and looked down, with a frown, upon the floor, and, with his hands in his pockets, meditated for a minute or two.

"I don't like acting alone, if it can be helped," he began again; "but if Mrs. Ware, your mamma, wishes it, I'll write to the different professional men, Mr. Jarlcoat at Golden Friars, and Mr. Williams at Cardyllion, and the two solicitors in the south of England, and I'll ascertain for her, as nearly as we can, what is left, and how everything stands, and we must learn at the bank what balance stands to your credit. But I think your mamma

should know that she can't possibly afford to live in the way she has been accustomed to, and it will be only prudent and right that she should give all the servants, except two or three whom she can't do without, notice of discharge. Is there a will?"

"I don't know. I think not—mamma thinks not," I said.

"I don't believe there is," he added. "It's not likely, and the law makes as good a will for him as he could have made for himself." He thought for a minute, and then went on. "I felt a great reluctance, Miss Ware, to talk upon these unpleasant subjects; but it would not have been either kind or honest to be silent. You and your mamma will meet your change of circumstances with good sense and good feeling, I am sure. A very great change, I fear, it will be. You are not to consider me as a professional man, tell your mamma. I am acting as a friend. I wish to do all I can to prevent expense, and to put you in possession of the facts as quickly and clearly as I can, and then you will know exactly the case you have to deal with."

He took his leave with the same air of care, thought, and suppressed fuss which belongs to the overworked man of business.

When these people make a present of their time, they are giving us something more than gold. I was not half grateful enough to him then. Thought and years have enabled me to estimate his good nature.

I was standing at the window of a back drawing-room, a rather dark room, pondering on the kind but alarming words, at which, as at the sound of a bell, the curtain seemed to rise for a new act in my life. These worldly terrors were mingling a new poison in my grief. The vulgar troubles, which are the hardest to bear, were near us. At this inopportune moment I heard the servant announce some one, and, looking over my shoulder quickly, I saw Mr. Carmel come in.

I felt myself grow pale. I saw his eye wander for a moment in search, I fancied, of mamma. I did not speak or move.

The mirror reflected my figure back upon myself as I turned toward him. What did he see? Not quite the same Ethel Ware he had been accustomed to. My mourning-dress made me look taller, thinner, and paler than before. I could not have expected to see him; I looked, I suppose, as I felt, excited, proud, pained, resentful.

He came near; his dark eyes looked at me inquiringly; he extended his hand, hesitated, and said:

"I am afraid I did wrong. I ought not to have asked to see you."

"We have not seen any one—mamma or I—except one old friend, who came a little time ago."

My own voice sounded cold and strange in my ear; I felt angry and contemptuous. Had I not reason? I did not give him my hand, or appear to perceive that he had advanced his.

I could see, though I did not look direct at him, that he seemed pained.

"I thought, perhaps, that I had some claim, also, as an old friend," he began, and paused.

"Oh! I quite forgot that," I repeated in the same tones; "an old friend, to be sure." I felt that I smiled bitterly.

"You look at me as if you hated me, Miss Ware," he said; "why should you? What have I done?"

"Why do you ask me? Ask yourself. Look into your conscience. I think, Mr. Carmel, you are the last person who should have come here."

"I won't affect to misunderstand you; you think I influenced Lady Lorrimer," he said.

"The whole thing is coarse and odious," I said. "I hate to speak or think of it; but, shocking as it is, I must. Lady Lorrimer had no near relations but mamma; and she intended—she told her so in my hearing—leaving money to her by her will. It is, I think, natural and right that people should leave their money to those they love—their own kindred—and not to strangers. I would not complain if Lady Lorrimer had acted of her own thought and will in the matter. But it was far otherwise; a lady, nervous and broken in health, was terrified, as death approached, by people, of whom you were one, and thus constrained to give all she possessed into the hands of strangers, to forward theological intrigues, of which she could understand nothing. I say it was unnatural, cruel, and rapacious. That kind lady, if she had done as she wished, would have saved us from all our misery."

"Will you believe me, Miss Ware?" he said, in the lowest possible tones, grasping the back of the chair, on which his hand rested, very hard, "I never knew, heard, or suspected that Lady Lorrimer had asked or received any advice respecting that will, which I see has been publicly criticised in

some of the papers. I never so much as heard that she had made a will; I entreat, Miss Ware, that you will believe me."

"In matters where your Church is concerned, Mr. Carmel, I have heard that prevarication is a merit. With respect to all that concerns poor Lady Lorrimer, I shall never willingly hear another word from you, nor ever speak to you again."

I turned to the window, and looked out for a minute or two, with my fingers on the window-sash.

Then I turned again rather suddenly. He was standing on the same spot in the same attitude, his hands clasped together, his head lowered, his eyes fixed in a reverie on the ground, and I thought I saw the trace of tears on his cheek.

My moving recalled him, and he instantly looked up, and said:

"Let me say a word: whatever sacrifice my holy calling may impose, I accept with gratitude to Heaven. We are not pressed into this service—we are volunteers. The bride at the altar never took vow more freely. We have sworn to obey, to suffer, to fight, to die. Forewarned, and with our eyes open, we have cast all behind us: the vanities, hopes, and affections of mortality, according to the word of God, hating father, mother, sister, brother, we take up the heavy cross, and follow in the blood-stained footsteps of our Master, pressing forward, with blind obedience and desperate stoicism, we smile at hunger, thirst, heat, and cold, sickness, perils, bonds, and death; such soldiers, you are right in thinking, will dare everything but treason. If I had been commanded to withhold information from my dearest friend, to practise any secrecy, or to exert for a given object any influence, I should have done so. All human friendship is subject with me to these inexorable conditions. Is there any prevarication there? But with respect to Lady Lorrimer's will, I suggested nothing, heard nothing, thought nothing."

All this seemed to me very cool. I was angry. I smiled again, and said:

"You must think all that very childish, Mr. Carmel. You tell me you are ready to mislead me upon any subject, and you expect me to believe you upon this."

"Of course that strikes you," he said, "and I have no answer but this; I have no possible motive in deceiving you; all that is past, inexorable, fixed as death itself!"

"I neither know nor care with what purpose you speak. It is clear to me, Mr.

Carmel, that with your principles, as I suppose I must call them, you could be no one's friend; and no one but a fool could be yours. It seems to me you are isolated from all human sympathies; toward such a person I could feel nothing but antipathy and fear; you don't stand before me like a fellow-creature, but like a spirit, and not a good one."

"These principles, Miss Ware, of which you speak so severely, Protestants, the most religious, practise with as little scruple as we, in their warfare, in their litigation, in their diplomacy, in their ordinary business, wherever, in fact, hostile action is suspected. If a Laodicean community were as earnest about winning souls as they are about winning battles, or lawsuits, or money, or elections, we should hear very little of such weak exceptions against the inevitable strategy of zeal and faith."

I made him no answer; perhaps I could not do so at the moment. I was excited; his serene temper made me more so.

"I have described my obligations, Miss Ware," he said. "Your lowest view of them can now charge me with no treachery to you. It is true I cannot be a friend in the sense in which the world reads friendship. My first allegiance is to Heaven; and in the greatest, as in the minutest things, all my obedience is due to that organ of its will, which Heaven has placed above me. If all men thought more justly, such relations would not require to be disclosed or defended; they would simply be taken for granted—reason deduces them from the facts of our faith; we are the creatures of one God, who has appointed one Church to be the interpreter of his will upon earth."

"Every traitor is a sophist, sir; I have neither skill nor temper for such discussions," I answered, proving my latter position very sufficiently. "I had no idea that you could have thought of visiting here, and I hoped I should have been spared the pain of seeing you again. Nor should I like to continue this conversation, because I might be tempted to say even more pointedly what I think than I care to do. Good-bye, Mr. Carmel, good-bye, sir," I repeated, with a quiet emphasis meant to check, as I thought, his evident intention to speak again.

He so understood it. He paused for a moment, undecided, and then said:

"Am I to understand that you command me to come no more?"

"Certainly," I answered, coldly and angrily.

His hand was on the door, and he asked very gently, but I thought with some little agitation:

"And that you now end our acquaintance?"

"Certainly," I repeated, in the same tone.

"Heaven has sent me my share of sorrow," he said; "but no soldier of Christ goes to his grave without many scars. I deserve my wounds, and submit. It must be long before we meet again under any circumstances; never, perhaps, in this life."

He looked at me. He was very pale, and his large eyes were full of kindness. He held out his hand to me silently, but I did not take it. He sighed deeply, and placed it again on the handle of the door, and said, very low:

"Farewell, Miss Ware—Ethel—my pupil, and may God for ever bless you." So the door opened, and he went.

I heard the hall-door shut. That sullen sound smote my heart like a signal telling me that my last friend was gone.

Few people who have taken an irrevocable step on impulse, even though they have done rightly, think very clearly immediately after. My own act for awhile confounded me.

I don't think that Mr. Carmel was formed by nature for deception. I think, in my inmost soul, I believed his denial, and was sure that he had neither act nor part in the management of Lady Lorriemer's will. I know I felt a sort of compunction, and I experienced that melancholy doubt as to having been quite in the right, which sometimes follows an angry scene. In this state I returned to mamma to tell her all that had passed.

CHAPTER XL. A RAINY DAY.

MAMMA knew nothing distinctly about the state of our affairs, but she knew something generally of the provision made at her marriage, and she thought we should have about a thousand a year to live upon.

I could hardly recognise the possibility of this, with Mr. Forrester's forebodings. But if that, or even something like it, were secured to us, we could go down to Malory, and live there very comfortably. Mamma's habits of thinking, and the supine routine of her useless life, had sustained a shock, and her mind seemed now to rest with pleasure on the comparative solitude and quiet of a country life.

All our servants, except one or two, were under notice to go. I had also got leave from mamma to get our plate, horses, carriages, and other superfluous things valued, and fifty other trifling measures taken to expedite the winding up of our old life, and our entrance upon our new one, the moment Mr. Forrester should tell us that our income was ascertained, and available.

I was longing to be gone, so also was mamma.

She seemed very easy about our provision for the future, and I, alternating between an overweening confidence and an irrepressible anxiety, awaited the promised disclosures of Mr. Forrester, which were to end our suspense.

Nearly a fortnight passed before he came again. A note reached us the day before, saying that he would call at four, unless we should write in the mean time to put him off. He did come, and I shall never forget the interview that followed.

Mamma and I were sitting in the front drawing-room, expecting him. My heart was trembling. I know of no state so intolerable as suspense upon a vital issue. It is the state in which people in money troubles are, without intermission. How it is lived through for years, as often as it is, and without the loss of reason, is in my eyes the greatest physical and psychological wonder of this sorrowful world.

A gloomier day could hardly have heralded the critical exposition that was to disclose our future lot. A dark sky, clouds dark as coal-smoke, and a steady down-pour of rain, large-dropped and violent, that keeps up a loud and gusty drumming on the panes, down which the wet is rushing in rivers. Now and then the noise rises to a point that makes conversation difficult. Every minute at this streaming window I was looking into the street, where cabs and umbrellas, few and far between, were scarcely discoverable through the rivulets that coursed over the glass.

At length I saw a cab, like a waving mass of black mist, halt at the door, and a double knock followed. My breath almost left me.

In a minute or two the servant, opening the door, said, "Mr. Forrester," and that gentleman stepped into the gloomy room, with a despatch-box in his hand, looking ominously grave and pale.

He took mamma's hand, and looked, I thought, with a kind of doubtful inquiry in her face, as if measuring her strength to bear some unpleasant news. I almost

forgot to shake hands with him, I was so horribly eager to hear him speak.

Mamma was much more confident than I, and said, as soon as he had placed his box beside him, and sat down, "I'm so obliged to you, Mr. Forrester; you have been so extremely kind to us. My daughter told me that you intended making inquiries, and letting us know all you heard; and I hope you think it satisfactory?"

He looked down, and shook his head in silence.

Mamma flushed very much, and stood up, staring at him, and then grew deadly pale.

"It is not—it can't be less—I hope it's not—than nine hundred a year. If it is not that, what is to become of us?"

Mamma's voice sounded hard and stern, though she spoke very low. I, too, was staring at the messenger of fate with all my eyes, and my heart was thumping hard.

"Very far from satisfactory. I wish it were anything at all like the sum you have named," said Mr. Forrester, very dejectedly, but gathering courage for his statement as he proceeded. "I'll tell you, Mrs. Ware, the result of my correspondence, and I am really pained and grieved that I should have such a statement to make. I find that you opened your marriage settlement, except the provision for your daughter, which, I regret to say, is little more than a thousand pounds, and she takes nothing during your life, and then we can't put it down at more than forty pounds a year."

"But—but I want to know," broke in poor mamma, with eyes that glared, and her very lips white, "what there is, how much we have got to live on?"

"I hope from my heart there may be something, Mrs. Ware, but I should not be treating you fairly if I did not tell you frankly that it seems to me a case in which relations ought to come forward."

I felt so stunned that I could not speak.

"You mean, ask their assistance?" said mamma. "My good God! I can't; we can't; I could not do that."

"Mamma," said I, with white lips, "had not we better hear all that Mr. Forrester has to tell us?"

"Allow me," continued mamma, excitedly; "there must be something. Ethel, don't talk folly. We can live at Malory, and, however small our pittance, we must make it do. But I won't consent to beg." Mamma's colour came again as she spoke

this, with a look of haughty resentment at Mr. Forrester. That poor gentleman seemed distressed, and shifted his position a little uneasily.

"Malory," he began, "would be a very suitable place if an income were arranged. But Malory will be in Sir Harry Rokestone's possession in two or three days, and without his leave you could not go there; and I'm afraid I dare not encourage you to entertain any hopes of a favourable, or even a courteous hearing in that quarter. Since I had the pleasure of seeing Miss Ware here, about ten days or a fortnight since, I saw Mr. Jarlcot, of Golden Friars; a very intelligent man he evidently is, and does Sir Harry Rokestone's business in that part of the world, and seemed very friendly; but he says that in that quarter"—Mr. Forrester paused, and shook his head gloomily, looking on the carpet—"we have nothing good to look for. He bears your family, it appears, an implacable animosity, and does not scruple to express it in very violent language indeed."

"I did not know that Sir Harry Rokestone had any claim upon Malory," said mamma; "I don't know by what right he can prevent our going into my house."

"I'm afraid there can be no doubt as to his right as a trustee; but it was not obligatory on him to enforce it. Some charges ought to have been paid off four years ago; it is a very peculiar deed, and, instead of that, interest has been allowed to accumulate. I took the liberty of writing to Sir Harry Rokestone a very strong letter, the day after my last interview with Miss Ware; but he has taken not the slightest notice of it, and that is very nearly a fortnight ago, and Jarlcot seems to think that if he lets me off with silence, I'm getting off very easily. They all seem afraid of him down there."

I fancied that Mr. Forrester had been talking partly to postpone a moment of pain. If there was a shock coming he wanted resolution to precipitate the crisis, and looked again with a perplexed and uneasy countenance on the carpet. He glanced at mamma, once or twice, quickly, as if he had nearly made up his mind to break the short silence that had followed.

While he was hesitating, however, I was relieved by mamma's speaking, and very much to the point.

"And how much do you think, Mr. Forrester, we shall have to live upon?"

"That," said he, looking steadfastly on the table, with a very gloomy countenance,

"is the point on which, I fear, I have nothing satisfactory, or even hopeful," he added, raising his head, and looking a little stern, and even frightened, "to say. You must only look the misfortune in the face, and a great misfortune it is, accustomed as you have been to everything that makes life happy and easy. It is, as I said before, a case in which relations who are wealthy, and well able to do it, should come forward."

"But do say what it is," said mamma, trembling violently. "I shan't be frightened, only say distinctly, is it only four hundred? Or only three hundred a year?" She paused, looking imploringly at him.

"I should be doing very wrong if I told you there was anything—anything like that—anything whatever certain, in fact, however small. There's nothing certain, and it would be very wrong to mislead you. I don't think the assets and property will be sufficient to pay the debts."

"Great Heaven! Sir—oh! oh!—is there nothing left?"

He shook his head despondingly.

The murder was out now; there was no need of any more questioning; no case could be simpler. We were not worth a shilling.

If in my rain and godless days the doctor at my bedside had suddenly told me that I must die before midnight, I could not have been more bewildered. Without knowing what I did, I turned and walked to the window, on which the rain was thundering, and rolling down in rivers. I heard nothing; my ears were stunned.

COMPETITION.

COMPETITION, like most other things the roots of which strike deep into man's heart, is ancient beyond the ken of the historian and the ballad-singer. It springs from primary instincts, and has its origin in the very conditions of our existence. Professor Darwin's bold theory of natural selection would, within certain limits, be admitted by its bitterest opponents to be demonstrably true. Where there is not enough for all, and, it may be added, where no strong restraints of religious scruple or moral discipline prevail, a scramble, in which the weakest are pitilessly thrust to the wall, must ensue. Necessity, in its crudest form, knows but the law of force. "Thou shalt want ere I want," the once famous motto of a cattle-driving Border baron, is in fact a pithy exposition of the stern statutes

which hunger and thirst, heat and cold, impose in a greater or less degree upon the entire animal creation. However inevitable may be the struggle to live, and however nature may urge each and all of us to better his condition, it cannot be denied that all organised systems of society have found themselves at variance with this unsocial instinct. Even savages have long since discovered, what the cunning of the wolves had taught them from the beginning, that it is better to surround the game, and to make a fair division of the spoils of the chase, than for each solitary hunter to go forth against the bison or the elephant. Combination is rendered compulsory by the mutual need of defence against the foe, and of a common maintenance; and accordingly, a tribe must have sunk very low in squalor and famine, or must have risen to the semi-civilisation of the pastoral stage, before we find much inequality prevail among its members. All primitive legislation has had a tendency to repress mere greed, and to insist on fair-play for the feeblest of the community. Some law-givers have been unable to comprehend that there should be any battle of life at all. They have endeavoured, so to speak, to make mankind unselfish, instead of virtuous, by Act of Parliament, and have striven to reduce the human race to the condition of a hive of bees, or a colony of ants, in which no separate interests should prevent all from labouring faithfully for the commonweal.

Cato, doubtless, would have liked to have done for the Romans what Lycurgus of old had done for the Spartans, and to have drilled his Quirites into a stoical army of disciplined patriots, accustomed to the severest self-denial, and stirred by no impulse unconnected with the glory and credit of the senate and the people. It is not often, however, that a proud and warlike race can be brought to accept a regimen of black broth and gymnastics; and many a born martinet, from the days of Justinian to those of Frederick the Great, has reluctantly confessed that humanity was too elastic to be cramped within hard and fast boundaries. Even the Heracleids of Sparta itself presently grew weary of a system that left so little to personal inclination; while elsewhere the chief successes of repressive laws have been won over the obedient natives of Paraguanay and Peru, and always at the cost of crushing down the brighter and more fertile intellects of the highly-trained community. The

Mosaic code, on the other hand, contented itself with moderating, to the best of its powers, the too great eagerness of the struggle to be first. It preached justice and mercy; it opposed usury, and forbade harshness towards the debtor; but it never attempted to establish a dead-level of worldly prosperity beyond which no Jew could lawfully pass, nor did it interfere with the legitimate processes of commerce.

The passion for accumulating wealth, in countries where wealth meant power, splendour, and the receipt of homage, was essentially Oriental. It was not for a bare maintenance that those long caravans of sun-scorched traders — Pagan, Buddhist, Jewish, and Mahometan — have for uncounted ages made their painful way across desert and mountain. Selim, or Ishmael, or Hulaku, as he plods behind his laden camels over endless stretches of burning sands, confronting dangers that might appal a soldier, and enduring hardships that would do credit to an anchorite, is nerved by the hope of growing rich, among those with whom riches imply even more than they do with us. It is precisely the high place at the feast, the civility of the powerful, the adulation of the poor, that he covets. He wants to chat with the *cadi*, and to spread his praying-carpet in the grand mosque, under the very pulpit whence his good friend the *ulema* will call out the names and titles of the reigning sultan. When he rides by on his white ass, it will be his pleasure to see the salaams of the multitude, and to hear the murmur of fluent adulation with which the beggars of the bazaar will praise him for their share of broken meats from his table. It is well, he thinks, always to be able to afford snow with one's sherbet, and to hire or buy a skilled cook to prepare pilaff and sweetmeats for the veiled *Leilas* and *Fatimas* of the harem; but dearer still is the voice of praise, and the delicious sensation that he can make or mar the fortunes of those who are humbler than himself—that he can help a friend or crush an enemy.

The comparative rarity, in Asia, of great national wars, has probably contributed to encourage that extraordinary activity of the Eastern men of the mart compared with which that of our own early traffickers appears tame indeed. Centuries before the Hanse League arose, and while as yet a Venetian keel had not left its glittering wake on the dark green waters of the Adrian sea, caravans of turbaned traders annually penetrated into Equatorial Africa,

and as regularly faced the snow storms and salt storms of the Persian and Bucharian wilds. But then the potency of a well-filled money-bag was but as yet imperfectly recognised in Europe. The blast of the battle-trumpet filled the ears of men with its brazen clangour, and made them deaf to the seductive chink of heaped-up gold. Here, at home with us, the fighting man monopolised all honours save only the scholastic laurels that girt the furrowed brows of some metaphysical preacher, such as the Angelic Doctor or the eloquent lover of Heloise. A martial aristocracy of chivalric slaveholders kept up the tradition that the best lance, the manslayer the most in fashion, was to be considered as the mirror of the age and the cynosure of humanity. Among Paynim Turks and miscreant Moors the merchant had come into high honour long before the half-mythical Whittington feasted his king at Guildhall. Where all fought in defence of a beleaguered city, but where none, save the robbers of the desert, made war a trade, the charms of wealth were likely to become apparent much earlier than in lands where a strong arm and a firm seat were the principal titles to popular distinction.

Gradually as soldiership grew more and more professional, and the expense of warfare, and consequently the need of war's sinews, increased, a fairer field opened itself throughout Christendom for the acquirement of what money can buy. It was found out, certainly by the time of Edward the Third of England, that the richest king could sweep the chess-board of war. Thrifty Louis the Eleventh did more for France than that superb insolent Francis the First, or even than his magnificent namesake the Fourteenth Louis. Our own Edward the Third glitters down the page of history with a lustre that blinds most readers to the fact, that his French wars and the splendour of his court were ruinously expensive to the nation, while frugal Henry the Seventh, with his treasury gorged with savings, and ruling economically over a country which competent foreign observers pronounced to surpass all others in solid prosperity, cuts but a sorry figure beside his picturesque predecessor of the battle-field and tournament.

By Elizabeth's time the lesson that money is power had been thoroughly got by heart, and England, Holland, and, to a less degree France, went mad upon the subject of acquiring, by fair means or by foul, a share in the golden harvest which Spain was

reaping from the small seed which those few pinks and caravels of Isabella's lending had enabled Columbus to sow in the discovery of the wonderful Western Indies. Chroniclers of the last Tudor reign express in quaintly vigorous English their reprobation of the sudden mania for quickly growing rich which had infected even the squirearchy of England, a class hard to move from its habitual groove. Gentlemen, so the gossiping historian piteously remarked, made themselves tanners, grocers, maltsters, smiths, nay, butchers, for the love of lucre. They thought, like Vespasian, that coin, however got, smelt sweet enough. They dabbled in all sorts of strange speculations. Not content with their home ventures, the more enterprising of them planted petty colonies on the shores of the New World, soon to be cut off by the sword of the Spaniard, or to perish miserably by hunger and disease, by domestic brawls, and the arrows of the Indians. As pirates, at least by proxy, they earned an unenviable renown, to which we owe in great part the early excellence of our national navy. But all this feverish grasping at wealth was due to the ardent competition for place, power, luxury, and all the pleasant things that money brings in its train. The neck of the feudal system was at last utterly broken. Gold was supplanting steel, and the question now was how many pounds sterling of annual revenue could be relied on, not how many vassals would muster when the banner should be given to the wind.

Mediæval law and custom had attempted to regulate competition rather than to abolish it. And the precise shape which legislation took was to transfer the struggle from the individual to the body corporate. The guild of weavers, and not that insignificant unit, Simon Thrum, dealt with the pretensions of customers, prentices, and journeymen. The grocers had their price for all the toothsome wares they drew from the far Ind and the unknown Spice Islands, and woe to the false brother who sold his sugar and his saffron for less than Grocerdom had decreed. Every corporation was a club, difficult of access, and governed on the principle of the greatest profit for the smallest number. This was a thing completely in tune with middle-aged views of right and wrong. Individuality was indeed as little encouraged under the feudal system as it is in a society of Shakers. No one being supposed to belong to himself, it seemed disgraceful for one little lonely Jack Horner to pick over many plums out

of his exclusive pie. But a convent of monks, an art and mystery of cordwainers or merchant-tailors, an order of knights, could do, without much blame, what any one man would have been censured for doing, and could arrange, for the common benefit, a pacific crusade against the pockets of the profane vulgar. It was not until one tottering fragment of the mouldering fortress of privilege had gone down to dusty ruin after another, that the principle of a fair field and no favour became entitled to even theoretical toleration.

That competition has its merits is plain enough. It is, as a keen-edged axe, potent to clear away the foul growth of that jungle of abuses which monopoly always fosters. Once that that active element is eliminated from human affairs, we find vested interests of the most monstrous kind start up to clog every avenue in life. Future generations will marvel at the patience with which their progenitors bore with the Six Clerks, fattening on fabulous fees for the obstruction of business; with the Palace Court, of which the judge and his deputy, the six attorneys and four counsel, were joint proprietors; and of scores of other anomalies, from clerks of the hanaper to functionaries by far more important. Just so do we wonder that the sovereigns of France and Spain, in the plenitude of despotic power, were yet slaves to their own volunteer servants; that a duke could buy the right to help majesty on with its embroidered coat, and a marchioness inherit the privilege of offering rouge and pearl-powder at the elaborate toilette of a queen.

Among the other results of the world-shaking revolution in which France took the lead, not the least notable was the extraordinary development of competition. All prices rose, as the standard of comfort was raised, and new industries, undreamed of before, came into being as by the bidding of a good fairy, or the flourish of a magic wand. In England, in South Germany, in France, whole classes of the population insisted on being better fed and clothed than had previously been the case. There was a tacit revolt against the black rye loaf, the porridge, the skim-milk cheese. Jacques Bonhomme suddenly renounced the meal of roasted chestnuts; Hans of Hesse craved to dine on something better than unripe potatoes and oatcake; honest Hodge formed a life-and-death alliance with the white loaf which had formerly figured only on the table of the farmer whose fields he

ploughed. Agriculture, freed from the short-sighted restrictions of those who cared more for the game than the crops, rapidly improved on both sides of the Rhine, and the surplus of the rustic population flowed into the cities where new manufactures required a supply of labour. Gradually competition seemed to reach, especially in countries where the English speech prevailed, its zenith. The passage from one rank to another became comparatively frequent and easy, while distinctions of dress became daily less marked, as silk and velvet, lace and gold thread, were no longer opposed at one of the social poles to the frieze and fustian which had belonged to the other.

There have always been minds to which there was something shocking and unwelcome in all this striving and scrambling for the biggest portion of the world's benefits. Many a teacher would fain have suppressed the restless greediness of the aspirants, and substituted more unselfish aims for the mere instinct to rise over the heads of others. The same sentiment inspires trade unions, and dominates in the councils of the International Society. Hogarth's industrious apprentice, that model young man who perfected himself in his trade and married his master's daughter, would be astonished to find himself scouted as a deserter, or eyed askance as a self-seeking egotist by many not unintelligent working men of the present day. It is all very well to say that the worthy young fellow rose in life by strictly moral means, but the question would now be put, in all seriousness, as to the apprentice's right to rise in life at all. In other words, a strong undercurrent of public opinion has now set in, hostile to personal ambition even of a virtuous kind, and which insists on regarding the world, not as a racecourse on which the palm of victory is justly awarded to the winner, but rather as a desert across which all should march at a pace adapted to the strength of the weaker members of the company, equally dividing, meanwhile, the store of provisions which are to sustain them on the road. From this point of view the arbitrary rules that govern many trades, the prejudice against piecework, the prohibition of "chasing," seem no longer capricious, based though they undoubtedly are on an economical fallacy. Once assume, what many are ready to take for granted, that the possible amount of work and wages is fixed within hard and fast limits, and we can understand that the good workman,

the clever mechanic who gets through his task with deft rapidity, is regarded by his companions pretty much as would be a soldier whose inordinate appetite led him to devour his comrades' rations in addition to his own. How wasteful and how erroneous such a practical belief may be, Blue Books and familiar experience unite to tell us; but it is useless to deny its existence, or that it comes into frequent collision with the most powerful motives that can induce men to struggle up the rounds of the social ladder.

Purely honorary distinctions exercise a very varying influence in stimulating those before whom is put the chance of winning them. Grown men, broadly speaking, are more alive to their value than children are. The studious boy who proudly glances at the brilliant bindings, all gold and Russia leather, of the many presentation volumes which he has brought home to grace his father's bookshelves; the quick-witted schoolgirl who weeps passionately because, after months of toil, that odious Cecilia Sapper has carried off the French prize, these two old friends of our youth, common in print, are very rarely to be met with in the flesh. The average of public schoolboys do their best at cricket, or rowing, or football, because proficiency in athletics of any sort is really a claim on the suffrages of a gymnastic generation; but it would require a persuasive tongue, indeed, to make yonder lads in flannels and bright-coloured caps believe that the narrow-chested hard-working boy who has a portmanteau full of prize-books is in any way comparable to Sampson Senior, who made seventy-nine runs against the best bowling of the county, or to young Light-foot, who got to the finish of his one mile race in four minutes and forty-seven seconds.

At the universities, where the tree of knowledge bears Hesperian fruit, in the form of scholarships and fellowships, and professional chairs, and fat college livings, it is not surprising that some midnight petroleum should be burned, some exertions made, to secure them. There is solid pudding to be earned by perseverance, as well as the less substantial commodity of praise. The wonder rather is that more striplings are not tempted by steady work to insure a moderate competence out of the crumbs that fall from the table of learning. But public opinion sets in the opposite direction, and its edicts are imperative indeed when addressed to those whom

their position on the threshold of man's estate, so to speak, renders peculiarly sensitive to the judgment of those with whom they live. The amiable superstition that every double-first was certain of parliamentary prestige and high preferment, that a senior wrangler was synonymous with a sucking attorney-general or a future bishop, has long faded into the limbo of day-dreams. Now-a-days there is only too much inclination to ignore the utility of great classical or mathematical attainments; and although it is admitted that some statesmen of the first rank have been university prizemen, few of their successors care to seek the bubble reputation through the medium of Greek iambics, or of sines and quotients. It is not merely that muscle is in high demand, and that the stroke of the best racing eight, the champion cricketer, the Thor of hammer-throwing contests, is now a hero artlessly to be worshipped, but that the emoluments to be earned by learning fall so very far behind what is daily won by hard-headed commercial shrewdness and knowledge of the world.

Curiously enough, men of mature age are more easily stirred to put forth their full powers by the hope of obtaining some sparkling gewgaw, a ribbon, a star, a title, a few magic letters to be printed after the name, than would be the case with their juniors. The withered heart of some elderly diplomatist will flutter at the prospect of a grand cross or a royal miniature set in diamonds, like that of a young girl on the eve of her first ball. Grim, white-moustached veterans of the Old Guard used to weep when the man in the loose grey riding-coat, the little three-cornered historical hat, and well-worn black boots, rode up to pin the decoration of the Legion on the breast of their shabby, war-stained uniforms. Highly respectable citizens, in all countries, pine and canvass, and lay their little innocent plots, for the coveted honour of being mayor, or town councillor, or churchwarden, and after years of long-ing perhaps find the game to have been hardly worth the candle. That a minister of state should appear an enviable being is natural enough. He is fairly paid; his high place, and his presumed acquaintance with the deepest political secrets, give a weight to his lightest utterances; he is in daily communion with the great ones of the earth; and, above all, he has some power, and is credited with ten times more than he really has. But the couch of

roses on which these Olympians lie are not exempt from thorns. Apart from the sharp criticism of party foes, and the unsparing comments of the press, every one of the helmsmen who undertake to steer the good ship of the commonweal must be painfully alive to the fact, that he cannot do a tithe for his friends of what those friends deem themselves to have a right to. Great indeed is the resentment that rankles in many a gentle breast, as Tommy, or poor Jack, or aspiring Arthur, remains unprovided for, although the Right Honourable Francis Fairservice, on whose arm Tommy's, or Arthur's, or Jack's mammas have often gone down to dinner, is in proud possession of a crimson despatch-box in Downing-street or Whitehall. It is vain to tell the murmurers that the much-abused Secretary for Singular Affairs is harassed to death with similar applications; that head clerks must be consulted and meritorious subordinates promoted; that some regard to qualifications is prescribed by official decorum. It is to no purpose thus to reason. Nothing can do away with the fact that every distributor of ministerial loaves and fishes will have to send four-fifths of the expectants empty-handed away.

Competitive examinations, if not regarded as a perfect panacea for all earthly ills, as was almost the case when they were in the first flush of their triumphant progress, must beyond doubt have opened the door to many deserving candidates whom Britannia would never otherwise have numbered among her public servants. They have also lightened the burden of ministerial responsibility, since so few posts are now in the direct gift of a member of the official hierarchy. But much the same results seem likely to follow their adoption among ourselves that attended their establishment, ages ago, in China. There is nothing new under the sun, and while inequalities of fortune exist, money will assert itself, even in a fair and free competition for the greatest number of marks. Most of the mandarins, though by no means all, were the sons either of members of the literary aristocracy of China, or of her merchant-princes. There are excellent schools, to which the humblest can get access, and so qualify for a share in the government of the Central Kingdom. But to live it is necessary to eat; a boy's labour is of value to his family; the same influences which remove little Dick and Harry prematurely from the national school to earn

fourpence or sixpence in the fields, are active in far Kathay. Very clever, or very plodding youths, may and do go gloriously through the whole curriculum of Confucian philosophy, of poetry, and science, and so die as satraps squeezing wealth from vast provinces, and envied wearers of the round red coral button of the loftiest grade. But in general the successful are those who have had tutors and teachers from infancy, to whose hands the paint-brush has been familiar ever since they began to explore the portentous pictorial alphabet, and who lisped in numbers because the flowery versification of the class to which they belonged was as vital air to them.

The contest of the crammers and the examiners has been almost as interesting, and probably as arduous, as the perennial duel between ships and guns. Just as it is all but impossible to construct a lock which some other cunning artificer cannot pick, so it appears hopeless to devise a system of questions that shall test the sterling stuff of which competitors are made, without reference to the cut-and-dried information with which they have been supplied. Change after change may be made, surprise after surprise attempted, but the ingenuity of the scholastic wire-pullers is equal to the occasion. The disgusted examiner, confident in his precautions, gradually recognises the truth that he is not conversing with George Griffin, junior, but with Doctor or Mr. Varnish, M.A., who has a string of honorary capitals appended to the name that heads his prospectus, who speaks all languages, knows something of everything, and is growing rich apace by preparing young gentlemen for the civil and military service of their country. Mr. Griffin is there in the body, certainly, with his pink ears and heated forehead, and his preceptor is as undoubtedly absent, but, nevertheless, Mr. Examiner cannot but feel that all his well-meant efforts are as thoroughly baffled as if the young man were a medium, and Mr. Varnish held him under some as yet unknown mesmeric influence. There is no getting at the lad's real brain, no finding out what he will be when he shall at no distant date have forgotten Varnish and all his works. As it is, that subtle instructor of youth has armed him at all points. He is a pattern pupil, and has absorbed exactly such information—and no more—as will help him well through the ordeal that lies before him. If caught tripping on one subject, he is comfortably bolstered up on all the rest, and as the defeated examiner

grudgingly sends in his name at the top of the list, he is forced to acknowledge with a sigh that Varnish is a very clever fellow. So he is, but services like his are very costly luxuries, and if any class of men derive direct benefits from competition, there is little doubt that Mr. Varnish and his compeers are of the number.

THE GODS OF THE HEARTH.

ONLY a picture, dimmed and smirched
By many a weary year.
Only a plant, with a rugged stem,
Its scant leaves frail and sere.
Only a book, its pages torn,
Its dainty binding stained.
Only a harp, with its music jarred,
Its strings all dumb and strained.
Only a phrase, that strikes the ear,
As awkward, dull, or cold.
Only a ring, with its jewel flawed,
And rust on its tarnished gold.

Yet, that portrait stirs one secret heart,
As no masters' work can do.
Those flowers for one outbloom all buds,
Of royal scent and hue.
No poet's golden utterance
Charms as those pages did.
No lute has melody half so sweet,
In its measured cadence hid.
Those rough frank words a courtly phrase,
Sounds scarce so dear or true.
No sapphire shines the glow that once,
The poor pale turquoise knew.

The Gods of the Hearth they reign supreme
On the altar of the heart.
Life flashes on its varying way,
Each takes his destined part.
The wheel revolves, the sunlights glint,
Storms roar, and quick rains fall.
The thorns grow thick on the rose's stem,
Death strikes, to end it all;
But oh it is only his mighty hand
That can hurl them from their throne:
The Gods that Home, and Heart, and Hearth,
In Love unite to own.

LOLA. AN IDYL.

THE house was one of the nest-like sort, low-roofed, thatched, with latticed windows buried in greenery, with a dove-cote on the gable, and rustic porch and veranda. It stood in a forest country, and, with its garden, orchard, and scraps of velvety pasturage, was surrounded on many sides by trees climbing on heights, trees dipping and curtsying in hollows, trees wading into the river where the red-sided cattle loved to drink, trees lying in soft heaps against the silver greys of cloudland with a mysterious blue mist behind their boles.

The morning glitter was on everything as the master of the house, going out with his dog, stopped and spoke over the low garden wall to his wife, who, with hands

in her apron-pockets, was standing gazing attentively at her bee-hives.

"Let Fan have the satin for this time, but she must try to do with less. Our living is too expensive."

"I have just been thinking of where we can economise," replied the wife in an irritated tone. "We are too many in the house for one thing. It is time that girl Lola was earning her bread."

"Humph!" said the husband; "I think she earns it already. She saves you a nursery governess."

"I can teach the children myself," was the reply, "and their sisters must learn to help. Lola gets nothing from us but food and shelter. It would be only fair to let her go into the world."

"She's a shy thing, and is better where she is. Besides, what would become of Granny's children?"

The husband and wife had walked slowly from the bee-hives to the house, and stood under a lattice window, which lay open.

"Talking of Granny," said the husband, "how long is Gray going to stay at Rose-lands? He's a good deal here, isn't he?"

"He's very pleasant company."

"And our girls are attractive."

"Nonsense! How little you know of your own children! I have brought up my girls to have their feelings under prudent control. There is no mistake about his footing in this family."

"Well, I'm glad you are all so prudent, for he'd be the better of a good wife. He's a good fellow, and a clever fellow, though poor as Job."

The porch swallowed the mistress of the house, and the master went off whistling; and then a face leaned forward and looked out of the lattice window, pale, but with a sort of under glow, giving a warm charm to its dimpled softness, with darkness and depth about the eyes, and brightness about the hair which the sunshine now illuminated with a genius for love in every curve of it, and a sort of golden light wavering across the steady eyes and grave though happy mouth.

"Thank God I am not a young lady!" murmured Lola, taking her fingers out of her ears, where she had placed them all too late. "What would they think if they knew what he said to me yesterday?"

She rose up quivering at the recollection, nearly touching the slant roof with her head in her pride. The room was dark, and scarcely large enough to hold Lola and a glass of flowers and some woodcuts

framed with plaited twigs on the dimly-lighted walls.

"He'd be the better of a good wife," said Lola, echoing the words that had come up to her through the ivy, "but he's poor as Job, and so the fine ladies leave him to me. I wonder what it would be like, being a good wife to a man as poor as Job. There would be a good deal of scrubbing and rubbing, I dare say; but I'm ready for it if I'm wanted. Thank Heaven I am not delicate!" feeling her firm pliant wrists with her clasping fingers. "I'd as soon cook the dinner as do worsted work any day. It's well I have no elegant tastes; making common things look pretty is the finest I have. I have rather a good appetite" (ruefully), "but then I could live on bread and milk. I can cook; I can wash; and I can make clothes. The smallest, tiniest cottage, an easy-chair and a plain one; wine for him, milk for me; an evening lamp, bookcase, garden, good humour, plenty of flowers——"

Lola's thoughts wandered away, and lost themselves in the delights of the home she was sketching. She shook herself out of her dream with a low laugh of undoubting happiness. "Chicks will be waiting—Granny will scold!" She adjusted her white calico dress, plucked a crimson rose that was hanging over the sash, and fixed it, with artistic fingers, in her bosom, smoothed a wilful ripple out of her shining hair, took a sun-burned straw hat from a peg on the wall, and went out of the small chamber, and out of the house.

Granny's house was handsomer than that nest-like one in which Lola lived on sufferance. Granny was not rich, but she liked to keep up a certain old-fashioned grandeur. Indeed, none of these people in this forest country considered themselves as people who were certainly poor. Granny must have trips to London, and two horses in her carriage, and her son, who lived in the nest-house, would have been very well off only that Fan must have her satin dress, and he his hunters. Lola was the richest of them all, with her little lodging for nothing under the ivy, and her slender wage for teaching two small orphan cousins, whom Granny had taken to herself. Lola was the only one amongst them who knew how to enjoy her life.

Lola's way lay through a green lane, across fields, over the river on a rustic bridge, and then plunged into a wood, through a blue tunnel hollowed among

leaves, where the path was moist and brown with dew. Then she entered Rose-lands, which deserved its name, and went into the house with the perfume of thousands of roses hanging about her. Granny was a wilful old lady, who loved lilac ribbons in her cap, and old china in her cabinets, and who could scold and pet little people, and sometimes big people too. She was somewhat severe upon grown-up young folks, unless they happened to get sick, when she became an angel. Arthur Gray was an invalid when she first made his acquaintance, and people said this was why she took such a fancy to him. He was a son of a distant connexion of the family, dropped by chance into their lives—clever, poor, and with no friends. The ladies hearing he was scientific, had at first stood a little in awe of him, with an idea that science is uncomfortable; but Gray had been presented to Granny by the most famous scientific man in London. We do not say that Granny would not have been kind to him if she had picked him up in the gutter, yet the great man had his weight when he did choose to step into the scale of the young man's chances of finding favour among his kinsfolk.

Granny was sitting in her dainty antique drawing-room at the head of a table drawn up in a cool corner under the shade of green blinds, her work-basket before her, her children on either side with open books, and Arthur Gray at the foot of the table, pencil in hand. He was now no longer an invalid, and was supposed to be pluming his wings for some wonderful flight in the regions of scientific discovery. By the sidelong looks of awe which Granny was casting towards him over the rims of her spectacles, she evidently thought he was at this moment deep in some abstruse calculation; but he was only scribbling faces in his pocket-book. He had a broad, square brow, and troubled eyes, and a mouth which betrayed a character resolute and tender. He was a man who had a great future before him—of hard toil, heartache, and fame.

Lola was late. Granny pointed to the timepiece, and the lessons began. Lola's voice was low in asking the questions, and the children's tones were shrill in giving the answers. Granny rapped with her knitting-needle on the table when things were not going so as to please her. Arthur Gray remained for the study, and his study was Lola's face. Lola's voice grew lower, and Granny's raps fell fast upon the

board. Arthur Gray suddenly got up, and left the room.

He walked out on a terrace, and paced up and down. Life was at this moment a tangled skein to him. He wanted to have for his own that sweet woman in-doors who was teaching the children, yet how was he to have her without blighting his career? Marriage meant poverty, struggling, uncongenial drudgery, and Arthur had had enough of it from childhood up. Genius was stirring within him; opportunity, at this moment, lay invitingly before him. He held in his hand a letter which invited him to join a scientific expedition to the other side of the world. A few months ago such an offer would have been hailed as the realisation of his sweetest dreams. But now there was Lola. Success, power, fame, all to be swept away by a woman's hand. Only this morning, as he sat scribbling at the table, he had declared to himself that the thing was monstrous, that it could not be; but Lola had walked into the room, and he had felt at once that it would be easier to walk hand in hand with her instantly into the valley of death, than to set out on any sunny path to fortune, leaving her behind.

He was nowhere to be seen when Lola and the children came out of Granny's house, and ran off towards the woods. The children from the next house met them with dinner in their bags: for this was to be an out-door holiday, while the elders of both families dined with a neighbouring magnate of the land. The children were wild with glee, Lola less wild than was usual on such occasions. The children tried to light a fire to roast their chestnuts, but failed, and Lola lay in the grass, her hat tilted over her mouth and eyes, and listened to the happy humming of the insects. The children cheered suddenly, the breeze blew Lola's hat aside, and here was Arthur Gray coming to join them.

This was like one of the old primeval days when the Garden of Eden bloomed, and before sorrow came into the world. Gray made a great fire, and screened it with thick boughs, so that the sun could not put it out. The children shrieked with delight, the chestnuts hissed and spluttered, the thrushes sang, the quail away in the meadows below sent up a satisfied comment on the state of things, and the lilies flapped their golden wings wantonly down in the river. The purple distance that girdled the forest world looked as inviting as the beautiful future

which young eyes see in dreams. The sunshine reddened on the boles of the trees, and on two faces that leaned towards each other often across the heads of the children. Dinner was eaten in the grass, with dock-leaves for dishes, and Arthur Gray told stories to the children about wonderful places and things which are to be found on this moving globe; showed them glittering caves in the heart of the earth, deserts with a fierce sun brooding over their blighted flats, and a flying camel carrying dark-faced men and women out of reach of a burning death, and, again, regions where the stars glitter big above mountains of ice, and the white bears wander from block to block of snow in the lonely seas. The children listened with bated breath. Had Mr. Gray seen these places? Should he ever see them? No, he thought not; he should never see them now. Yet that letter from the band of explorers burned unanswered against his heart.

Twilight came, and the little forest party went home for schoolroom tea. As they walked through the tunnel of leaves the children ran on before to have the kettle boiling, and Lola and Gray walked through the purple hollow, alone together. They did not speak much, but walked close together, hand in hand, slowly, and with full hearts. Arthur thought of nothing but that Lola's hand was in his; Lola thought of nothing but that he had taken that hand, and it could help him. As they turned from the shade into the open space lighted by a last glaring reflection from the vanished sun, a gorgeous troop of moving clouds was sailing along the horizon, purple and crimson-edged, upon a sea of gold. They had taken a shape like the pleasure-galley of some ancient Eastern queen, and floated solemnly, as if to music not heard on earth. Something like this was suggested to Lola's mind as the lovers stood still to look, but Arthur saw only the expedition, sailing away without him to shores unknown. For now he had made up his mind indeed. Let them go, said Arthur Gray; he would have Lola for his wife.

Next day, when the young governess went to Roselands to give the lessons, Arthur was already on his way to London to explain to his exploring friends that he could not join their party. He would arrange some matters of business, and return to the forest country and ask Lola to be his wife. He thought he knew well

what she would answer. There was only one woman in the world who would venture to share his poverty, but she was the only woman he wanted, for she was Lola. When the girl arrived at Granny's house she found the old lady walking up and down the path with a gold-headed stick and a large parasol, and a face of much unusual perturbation.

"I have given the children a holiday, and they are making hay in the meadow," said Granny to Lola. "I am going to have a talk with you. I have got at last," she continued, "what I have long been seeking for you, a situation in Paris, where you may see a little of the world, and improve yourself in French. For a girl who has to earn her bread such improvements are desirable, and you cannot go on expensive trips as your cousins can. I have a letter here from the gentleman who engages you. He will wait for you till to-morrow, when you must join him."

Lola's cheeks had become white. She reflected for a few moments, and then raised hereyes gravely to the old lady's face, saying:

"I cannot go."

"Now, Lola, listen to me. You are only a connexion of this family. I have always treated you as if you were my grandchild, and if I could have done more for you I should have been glad, but I am too poor."

"I should not have accepted more," said Lola.

"Don't be pert, miss, with your should nots and cannots. I have some questions to ask of you. Arthur Gray has gone to London. Do you know what his business is?"

"No," said Lola.

"Is it possible that he has asked you to marry him?"

"No."

"But he has done just the same, and you expect that he will ask you when he comes back?"

"Yes," said Lola.

"And you won't go away to earn your bread because you are waiting to be a mill-stone round a poor man's neck? You are resolved to wreck completely all the hopes he had cherished before he met you?"

A dreadful look had come into the young girl's eyes; she put her hand dizzily to her head.

"You silly child, don't you see that he is a poor man; no one could be poorer except yourself. If he were an ordinary

man this ought to deter you, for he would have to toil in a way you know little about to give you bread to eat. He is not a common man, but with a great career before him, that is, if you, a chit of a girl, do not step in to spoil it. He is too generous to tell you this perhaps, but I have no scruple in hurting you when it ought to be done."

"Tell me about his career," said Lola.

"The great person who introduced me to him in London," continued Granny, "said to me, 'This will be a distinguished man in a few years hence, if he only regains his health, and keeps himself free of encumbrances. I shall keep an eye on his career and push him onward if I can.' Gray talked to me about it during our journey down here; told me all his hopes while I was petting and taking care of him. I said, 'You must beware of a foolish marriage.' 'The worst thing that could happen to me,' was his answer. 'I hope you have nothing dangerous down in your country?' I remembered only my grand-daughters, and that they were a great deal too sensible to take any interest in him. I never thought of you at all, child; yet here you are doing the mischief, being neither wise for your own interests, nor generous in looking to his. You have ruined him so completely that he is gone to refuse an offer which would have given him fame and fortune had you not been in the way."

"What is that offer?" asked Lola.

"An expedition is sailing next week to the North Pole, or somewhere thereabouts. What they are going to do I am not sure about; but they are scientific men, and they have induced Arthur Gray to be of their party. A few short weeks ago he would have looked upon any one who had prevented his accepting this as an enemy. Now he goes to London to refuse it, in order that he may pin himself to drudgery and obscurity for life; that he may live in repining over what you have selfishly forced upon him, he being far too generous to disappoint you."

Lola did not answer a word, but stood with her face turned away, looking into the forest; then slowly turned away and began walking like a sleep-walker towards an opening in the trees. Granny looked after her angrily, too full of Arthur's wrongs to have any pity for the girl whom she counted his enemy. "An obstinate monkey," she said to herself, wrathfully, and muttered her way back to the house, while Lola spent two long hours alone in the forest. Only the trees, and the river,

and the singing grass saw her struggle; when she came back to Granny her face looked grey and old.

"I will join the gentleman to-night," she said, "and go to Paris with him."

Now that Granny was triumphant, a new feeling of pity came into her heart. But she knew she had done her duty, and that Lola was behaving well. She patted the girl on the shoulder, and sent her home to pack up her things, and made vague promises in her own mind that something good must certainly be done for Lola.

When Gray came back from London, there was no Lola in the forest country, and Granny explained to him how prudently the girl had acted.

"You could not expect of her that she would not seize a good offer when it presented itself," she said. "It is very well for men when women are found with a little common sense. She will have advantages in Paris, and will make a good marriage. Lola is a wise girl, and as for you, you will get over it."

"Certainly," said Arthur, "he would not interfere with any woman's prospects."

And then he also went alone into the forest, and complained that the world had never seen a faithful woman. The grass sighed again, and a smile curled the edges of the leaves of the trees, but not a thing hinted to him of Lola's sacrifice. That night he was again in London, and the next day he sailed with the expedition. As he looked over the ship's side, ambitious hopes rose in his heart, and subdued the pain that would have lingered still. The sea-foam gathered over the past of a few months. The sun of the old world set brilliantly upon what lay behind him; a summer dream, blue mists, dancing trees, sunny idleness, children's voices, and a woman's face framed in the purple shadow among leaves.

A CRITICAL MEETING.

A REMINISCENCE OF NORWAY.

"WELL, K., old fellow, to go or not to go, that is the question!"

"To go, of course. We shall hardly get a finer day for it, if we wait till Christmas; and if we start in an hour it'll just bring us back in good time for supper."

Time, seven o'clock on a glorious July morning; place, a little fishing hamlet on the coast of Norway, somewhat to the north of Throndhjem; dramatis personæ,

my friend Harry Flutterby and myself; question under consideration, a projected voyage across the fjord, to picnic upon a hitherto unvisited islet.

"All right," says Harry, "go it is, then. So, if you'll just see about breakfast, I'll step out and look after the boat."

"And while you're about it," suggest I, "just see if there are any letters for us; I see old Sigmund toddling along the edge of the fjord yonder."

"To hear is to obey," answers Harry; and away he strides at his usual tremendous pace, as if bent upon imitating that energetic giant who "walked round the world before breakfast every morning to get up an appetite."

Harry Flutterby was one of those lucky people who are styled as if by common consent "the best fellows in the world," and seem privileged to do what they please without fear of offence. A popular writer, a first-rate gymnast, an experienced traveller, an irresistibly jolly companion, he seemed made to be liked by everybody; and so he was. Indeed, he was popularly believed to have but one enemy, though that one (in poor Harry's opinion at least) fully atoned for the absence of others. I was already tired of hearing him quote, in his fits of effervescent vindictiveness:

*Der Wallfisch hat doch seine Laus,
Muss auch die meine haben.*

Harry was no Homer; but he had found a Zoilus in the person of a certain Mr. Frederick Slasher, critic-in-ordinary to the Draco, who waylaid and butchered poor Harry's literary bantlings as they issued from the press with a mercilessness worthy of Richard the Third. Indeed, one of my friend's chief reasons for joining me in our present trip was the desire of escaping for a little while from the sting of this gad-fly; but (as the Mahometan says) "no man can avert his destiny." I have barely completed my preparations for breakfast when I am startled by a furious stamping in the room below, and a blast of malediction that makes the crazy timbers rattle again. The next moment Harry comes flying up-stairs like a whirlwind, and flings an open letter on the table.

"There's that cursed fellow at it again, by Jove!" he roars, "and then to think of some beast actually cutting it out and sending it to me just when I was hoping for a little peace." Here the orator becomes incoherent from excess of emotion.

I pick up the extract, and find that it is

as I expected—Zoilus is at work again. I am beginning to glance through it when Harry, too furious to remain passive, snatches it from my hands, and shouting, "Just listen to this!" reads as follows:

"Mr. Flutterby's heroes are all of one type; men made up of all the aristocratic virtues, and more than all the aristocratic vices, half Rochester and half Camelford, carrying all known authors in their mouths, and all known crimes on their consciences, and happily combining the manners of Sir Charles Grandison with the conversation of La Rochefoucauld and the morality of Charles the Second; men who shoot a friend, or pick up a lady's glove with equal grace and self-possession, and alternate between criticising Goethe in the drawing-rooms of Grosvenor-square and thrashing prize-fighters in the taverns of Jermyn-street. Nor are these gentlemen's love affairs less extraordinary than themselves. The wrong man attached to the wrong woman, the wrong woman attracted by the wrong man, cross each other like the links of a daisy chain; and the series usually terminates in some cold and self-contained stoic, who is 'dead to love for evermore.' Indeed, the way in which such matters are arranged reminds us of nothing so much as the position of the Yankee sailors in the great storm, who 'stood in single file holdin' each other's hair on—only the hindmost critter was bald, and so didn't need it!' And as if matters were not complicated enough already, the heroine, consistent only in her inconsistency, invariably sets her affections upon the worst and most heartless of her countless admirers, clings to him with a constancy as romantic as it is incredible; and when he comes to the customary violent end, consoles herself by immolating a score of masculine hearts on his tomb. All this is doubtless very touching and pathetic, with the single drawback of being impossible; but it produces what the fairer portion of the novel-reading public would probably think a rather serious result, namely, the heroine never gets married at all. Busied with the Gothic sacrifice above mentioned, she marches on her devastating way, and disappears at the close of the third volume, with the miniature of a defunct guardsman in her escritoire, unutterable despair at her heart, and an obtrusive tinge of red on the tip of her nose. 'So geht der Mensch zu Ende!'"

"Isn't that too bad now?" roars Harry; "and that, too, when everbody says that

my love scenes are the best things I've done! And here again—just listen:

"One thing, however, Mr. Flutterby does understand—the advantage of a recurring simile. Homer himself was not more skilful in bringing in the same comparison a dozen times in succession. Whenever he has to describe houses surrounded by trees, we find them 'peeping like shy children from the arms of their encircling forests;' and this rule once laid down, they continue peeping to the end of the story. In fact, these indefatigable Babes in the Wood seem to haunt Mr. Flutterby's dreams as pertinaciously as the phantom child haunted those of Jane Eyre previous to the death of her aunt."

At this point Harry sums up his opinion of the critique by sending it flying through the window in fifty fragments, and sitting down to breakfast with an expression of countenance which might have suited Victor Hugo's Gilliatt when watching the midnight interview between Déruchette and Monsieur Caudray. But it is wonderful what a soothing effect a good breakfast has upon even the most lacerated nerves; and before the end of his third cup of coffee and second plateful of fresh salmon, even the outraged Harry begins to look as if there were still something worth living for. By the time we get down to the boat he is quite cheerful again.

"I had meant to have a pull," he observes, as we stow away our provision-basket in the stern; "but as the wind's in our favour, we may just as well hoist the sail, and take it easy. In the mean time, here's a Times that I haven't opened yet; just overhaul it, and give us what there is."

I unfold the august broad-sheet, and plod steadily through the various topics of the day—the Geneva Arbitration, Mr. Stanley's discovery of Doctor Livingstone, the demand for an increase of wages, the continuance of the coal famine, the rumoured progress of Russia in the Far East, the impending conference at Berlin—to all which Harry listens with silent attention.

"I'll tell you what," he remarks at length, with a meditative air, "I wish somebody would bring out a Diplomatic Dictionary, containing all the new political phrases now in use; for, really, if we go on long at this rate we shall forget the original meaning of words altogether. France suddenly attacks Germany, and calls it 'resisting unjust aggression.' Germany runs off with everything worth

stealing in France, and calls it 'levying contributions.' Austria gets together several hundred thousand men, and Heaven knows how many guns, and says that she does so 'to preserve peace.' America overcharges us at the rate of two thousand per cent, and mildly terms it 'indirect claims.' Russia knocks several thousand men on the head, sends half a dozen kings flying off their thrones, pockets a score of provinces, and christens these energetic amusements 'a mission of civilisation.' Upon my word, I've half a mind to start a dictionary myself."

"Do, my dear fellow, it will be a most interesting work, and I don't think your friend, Mr. Slasher, can find much to say against it."

"Don't mention the beast!" yells Harry, stung into momentary fury by the hated name. "I wish I could come across him just now!"

"He'd stand a poor chance if you did," remark I, glancing admiringly at my friend's mighty frame, which might serve as a model for Guy Livingstone, or any other disciple of the school of muscular anti-Christianity. But come, old fellow, look about you a bit—you're missing a first-rate view."

The surrounding panorama does, indeed, merit more attention than we have yet bestowed upon it. Overhead stretches the blue, cloudless sky, bright with all the short-lived splendour of the northern summer. Behind us lies the charming little valley that we have left, its smooth green surface standing out picturesquely against a dark background of forest; while in the midst of it, like chickens nestling round the mother-hen, the tiny red huts of the fishermen cluster around the little wooden church which their sturdy old pastor built with his own hands. To right and left, long ridges of dark heathy hill succeed each other like waves, ending at length in a mighty wall of black broken rock, on the summit of which it needs no stretch of imagination to picture to oneself Thor hurling defiance at the congregated Frost Giants, or chained Loki writhing as the poison drips upon his upturned face. All around us lies the smooth dark surface of the fjord, dappled with rocky islets wooded almost to the water's edge; while far away to the westward, where a huge gap breaks the great rampart of rock, a long white line marks the spot where the glassy lake meets the fury of the unrelenting ocean; and from the unseen

breakers beyond comes the deep sonorous monotone which Homer's hexameters learned from the roll of the Ionian sea.

"Come, now," says Harry, admiringly, "you've been about a good bit—did you ever see anything to beat this in Arabia, or Russia, or Brazil?"

"Depends on how you take them," answer I. "Arabia's an endless circus—Russia an endless billiard-board—and Brazil's all the waves of the Deluge frozen into forests. There's good scenery in all three, if you care to keep your eyes open; but I grant you that one doesn't see a view like this every day."

"This must be our island, just ahead," cries Harry, a moment later. "Stand by to lower the sail, while I fish out the boat-hook."

A few minutes later we disembark upon our miniature terra incognita, and, hastily mooring our boat, scramble up the rocks with our provision-basket. Having deposited this latter in a snug place under a clump of overhanging trees, we proceed to explore our new kingdom.

"I wish we had brave old Sartor Resartus here for five minutes," remark I; "wouldn't he enjoy himself! I remember his telling me once that, of all the pagan creeds, he liked the Scandinavian the best; and well he may—it seems just made for him."

"Holloa!" cries Harry, stopping short suddenly, as we turn a sharp corner, "look here!"

I spring forward, and perceive that our right of possession is already anticipated. At our feet, wrapped in a plaid, and with his head pillowed on a moss-grown root, lies a good-looking young man in a coarse tweed suit, with a fair complexion and reddish-brown moustache of an Englishman.

"Here's a rival Columbus in the field, then," remark I; "but how the deuce did he get here? I see no sign of a boat?"

"He's fast enough asleep, anyhow!" says Harry, "or else he must be stone deaf, not to have heard me shout. However, let's see what he's made of, at any rate;" and he gives the sleeper's shoulder a good shake.

"Excuse my disturbing you—but the sun's rather hot already, and you're lying right in it."

The stranger starts up, rubbing his eyes with an air of bewilderment.

"Many thanks," says he at length, with

a polite bow; "but—holloa! is the tide up?"

"Rather!" answers Harry, staring; "didn't you know?"

"Just like my luck!" cries the stranger, with an air of vexation. "I walked over from the seaward side last night, along that range of rocks yonder" (he points to something like a very ill-built garden-wall, standing gauntly out below the transparent water), "meaning to see the sun rise, and get back before the tide caught me; but, of course, I overslept myself, as I always do, when it's specially important that I should not."

"Just as it always rains on a picnic day, and a slice of bread always falls with the buttered side downward—a law of gravitation which I wish Sir Isaac Newton had investigated while he was about it," laughs Harry. "Never mind—we'll give you a cast back in our boat. Holloa! what the deuce! why, where on earth is the boat?"

Echo answered, "Nowhere!" Whether (as Harry afterwards asserted) the rope had got frayed through against a sharp rock, or whether (as I am inclined to suspect) he had been careless in reeving it—from whatever cause, the boat had got loose and floated away; and we found ourselves imprisoned in our new kingdom. We stared at each other for a moment, and then burst into a loud laugh.

"Ill-luck's catching, seemingly," said Harry. "Well, it can't be helped—we must just wait till the tide goes out. In the mean time, let's be as jolly as we can."

And very jolly we were, in spite of our mishaps. Our *al fresco* lunch was a decided success, and our unexpected guest proved a host in himself. He told good stories, cracked jokes, talked well on all manner of subjects, and sang comic songs by the half-dozen. It was a sufficient proof how thoroughly amused we had been, that all this time (Englishmen though we all three were) we had never thought of asking each other's names; but at length the idea seemed to strike Harry and the unknown simultaneously.

"I'll tell you what," said Harry, "I'll just give you my address, and you must come and see me when you get back to England; it'll never do to let our acquaintance drop, after such a romantic commencement."

"With great pleasure," answered the stranger; "and I'll give you mine. For

that matter, it's only by a fluke that I'm here at all just now, when I ought to be in London reviewing."

"Reviewing!" echoed Harry, starting as if he had been stung: you're not a reviewer, surely? By Jove, you're much too good a fellow for a beastly trade like that!"

"Beastly trade, eh?" said the other, laughing; "why, what harm has it ever done you? Surely I can't have cut up some book of yours without knowing it?"

The two men began to eye each other keenly. I, already foreseeing the glorious dénouement, drew a little aside to enjoy it at my leisure.

"What review do you belong to?" asked Harry, after a pause.

"The Draco," responded his new acquaintance.

"The Draco!" yelled Harry, in a voice that would have made the fortune of a boatswain. "There's no need to ask your name—you're Fred Slasher or the devil!"

"And you're Harry Flutterby!"

I have seen many a tableau on the stage, but never one to equal that. For a moment the two stood face to face like statues—and then suddenly burst into a tremendous roar of laughter, which the surrounding rocks echoed back as if Odin and his compeers were still revelling there.

"By Jove!" said Harry, wiping the tears from his eyes, "this is the best lark I ever saw in my life! Talk of a play! it beats all the plays put together! Do you remember that yarn in the Arabian Nights, where the old king locks his son up in the heart of the mountain, for fear Prince What's-his-name should come and kill him? And Prince What's-his-name was shipwrecked at the very place, and came and polished him off right enough! By Jove, this is just it over again—ha, ha!"

And the laughter began again louder than ever, till I joined in from sheer infection.

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Slasher; "this way along the rocks will bring you out on the other side of the fjord, and it's a good way from there to your diggings; so you'd better just stop with me to-night. I can promise you a good supper, anyhow, if old Bjorn does his duty."

And he did do it, as was amply proved by our trencher practice two hours later. A jollier evening, or a more entertaining host, it has never been my fortune to meet with; and it was long after midnight before our party broke up. Harry's fare-

well remark to his ci-devant enemy is well worth quoting :

"Tell you what, old fellow—it strikes me that if all the critics and authors who're at loggerheads just now in England, were to meet and talk things over quietly, as you and I have done, it would be a rattling good job for 'em both!"

And so say I.

NOTES OR GOLD?

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "FATAL ZERO," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XVI. A DISCOVERY.

HE stood before the pair, and in a quiet, calm voice said to her: "You are missing all the good music. Are you not coming back to the room?"

Corinna started up. Her face was radiant. Mr. Doughty looked from one face to the other with an angry suspicion.

"Will you come with me?" he said. "When they see such an artist as you absent, they will think the music I offer very poor indeed, and not worth listening to."

"Obey," said Mr. Duke, a little scornfully. "There is no alternative."

Mr. Doughty did not answer, but put her arm in his, and both walked away.

"What does this mean?" he said. "You were good enough to show an interest in our performance. You gave some useful hints; yet you did not think it worth listening to on this great occasion."

"Do forgive me, forgive me," said Corinna, eagerly; "it was stupid and thoughtless of me, and most ungrateful."

"Ungrateful," he said, quickly. "That is nothing. But thoughtless—ah! that means much more. I am not thoughtless where you are concerned. While you were engaged here I was thinking of you. It is all settled; that is, if you wish it to be settled, you have but to say yes. Express your wish, and your next appearance can be on a greater stage, in London; or, if you desire it, you can stay two years abroad with the best Italian masters. Understand," he added, hastily, "and this with no obligation to me. If you enter into a formal engagement, you will be independent, and the means will be provided from your future gains. You know that if I could venture to do so I would offer all that I had in aid of such a plan; but I dare not. But at all events there is what you have wished for open to you."

She was in great confusion. "What will you think of me if I tell you that now I do not care for this life?"

"A very sudden change," he said, gravely. "But are you in earnest? Have you quite made up your mind to this?"

"I should not like it; I feel no vocation for that kind of life. And this all comes suddenly."

"Shall I tell you what I feel?" he said, eagerly. "That I am delighted to hear of this resolution. I never could bear the idea of one like you—so sacred in my eyes—coming out before crowds in tawdry dresses and paint; but it was your wish, and what you decide on becomes ennobled. This, however, simplifies everything, and takes away a barrier. I fancied you were so devoted to your art, and to this purpose of the stage, that it would be idle—a profanation, indeed—to attempt to divert you from it. Now the time has come for me to speak freely, and say what has long been in my thoughts. May I?"

"No, no," said Corinna, almost passionately, "I implore you not. You must not. You will only detest me, for you will think I have been playing a double part. Let everything remain as it is. You must not say what you want to say. Continue to like me; let me not lose your friendship and esteem for ever."

Mr. Doughty was deadly pale. He looked at her with eyes that seemed almost to distend. There was a long silence, but at last he spoke. Corinna's eyes were bent upon the ground.

"You make too much of all this," he said, with a forced smile, "and I dare say I understand you. But I shall do so more clearly if you will answer one question. What is the reason of this change in your views? Come, now, be frank and open with me—a poor foolish man that has lived all his life in dreams and delusions, and is old enough to be your father. Come, speak," he added in almost a peremptory tone, "I have a right to know this."

"How am I to tell you?" faltered Corinna.

"Something that has made you happy—very happy?" he went on.

Still Corinna did not answer.

"I thought so," he answered, with an effort. "And of course your kindly and well-meant caution to me is connected with this event. Come," he again added, almost fiercely, "I am surely entitled to answers from you on these points; it is the least, after all, you can do."

"You misjudge me," said Corinna, a little frightened at his tone.

"Now then," he said, "listen to me, and weigh carefully, I conjure you, what I am going to say, and do not impute it to any selfish motive. I tell you, you are being led away by a shadow, by a phantom more light and vapourised than any that has ever danced before a traveller crossing a marsh. I warn you. I, who was your devoted friend, and worshipper—I mean who am so still, though you have deceived me."

"I have not, indeed. At least I never intended it."

"Perhaps I deceive myself; that, I suppose, must be the truth. But, I conjure you, think of my warning. It is not too late. I tell you as surely as I stand here, you will shipwreck all your happiness if you pursue the new course you have determined on. I know human nature, and man's human nature. You are deceived now, and will be deceived."

Corinna looked at him steadily. She forgot all else save the one subject nearest to her heart.

His lips trembled. "Mind, you have been warned. Do not blame me if you find yourself shipwrecked in peace and hope and happiness. Like all women you have settled your heart on those whose hearts are not settled on you, and who only think of trifling with you. But it is only one more disappointment for me; that yours may not come later is my wish."

There was something so bitter, and even hostile in his tone, in his tightened lips, that Corinna drew herself up and answered firmly:

"I have answered you candidly and fairly. And let me say that there is no one else whom I would have allowed to question me, or bring me to account. This was because I think you have a genuine interest in me. But let me assure you I never for a moment dreamed that, beyond a mere admiration for my musical gifts, and an interest in my position——"

"And you must not for the world dream anything else," he said, in a hard, sarcastic tone. "Your judgment was perfectly correct. A poor elderly virtuoso would not think of anything else unless he were a fool. I may be elderly, but not a fool, I trust. But we are losing all the fine music; people will be wondering what has become of us, and will be settling, as I believe some of the gossips have settled already, that some very serious matters are

being arranged. Let us go back, or rather I will bring you to your favoured cavalier, for whom, as I must conclude, you make the grand sacrifice of a career. Listen. As you have made me your confidant in this matter, I am bound to aid you to the utmost, and you may really depend on me. I have been singularly unlucky in the one or two attachments I have had in my life, so I must indemnify myself by forwarding the interests of others. I shall look after the favoured being in this case on whose faith you have staked your happiness, unwisely, as it seems to my dull mind. I solemnly promise you I shall strain every nerve to make him act as one ought to do who has been honoured by such an enviable preference!"

He seemed to Corinna to change as he spoke these words, which had a tone of menace in them rather than of friendly encouragement. She felt awed and helpless. This night, indeed, appeared to the gay and airy guests who were fluttering through Mr. Doughty's rooms to be no more than some pleasant evening of amusement like many others. But for the personages of this little piece it was one fraught with the highest dramatic interest. At many a ball and party and dinner, which to the average guest seems a mere formal show, some such strange drama is secretly going forward—the course of true love running smooth or roughly, jealousy and rage rising rampant; disappointment, the certain ruin of tomorrow, or excruciating physical pains being hidden away under smiles and agreeable talk. So it was to be, in some degree, with Mr. Doughty, Alfred Duke, and Corinna.

There never was a girl so full of a proper pride as this Corinna; a pride made singularly sensitive by the position of her family. Where there was any unfavourable misconception of her motives or behaviour, she would never condescend to set right those who could thus misconstrue her. Few of those who have followed this scene to the end would suspect that there had been a grave and serious misconception from beginning to end. In another case she would have swept away haughtily, under the impression that she had been treated with cruel injustice, but she thought of all Mr. Doughty's kindness, the romantic interest he had shown in her, and she put her pride away for a moment.

"There is here some change, some sudden resolution," she said, turning to him, "I can see this plainly. But take

care that there has not been a mistake here, a mistake that you may regret, that we may both regret. You may find it out too late."

"I have found it out," he answered, bitterly, "and am content. Now, let me bring you back to your friend and admirer."

They returned to the music-room. Lady Duke, sitting at the door, and eagerly scanning their faces, read in them a full and true account of all that had occurred. Her crafty scheme had succeeded so far. She had secured him in a moment, and interposed her daughter. "Emmeline is enchanted. She never heard such music in her life," &c. "Yes, indeed," says Emmeline, fervently, "it is a new world to me, like angels playing." This was pretty strong, and the speech was overheard by Will Gardiner, who was never weary of repeating it. He, too, had been watching the strange proceedings of the evening, and had kept wary watch on the parties.

"Well, Lady Duke," he said, in his bluntest style, "if the match doesn't come off after to-night, there never was love-making in this world. Miss Corinna might have her action against your son, and get swinging damages. Ha, ha! They would make a very handsome pair."

Mr. Doughty was standing close by, and heard this remark; so they could see by a sharp twitch which seemed to pass across his spare shoulders. It was as though some one had stabbed him in the back. Mr. Will Gardiner's face, so honest and jovial, was now a combination that seemed almost grotesque, of a sort of greed and malice that fitted badly with the old good nature. In a moment he had his arm in a most affectionate fashion about Mr. Doughty, who seemed to be fast growing back into "Old Doughty" again.

"Pon my word, you have done this magnificently. And I can tell you, you have given your protégée a regular prestige. I want to tell you the Dukes, both mother and son, are cottoning to her fast enough. 'Pon my soul, I believe they think you'll come down with a fortune for the girl."

Mr. Doughty slowly withdrew himself. "Your compliments are always elegant from their heartiness," he said. "The arrangement you suggest would, I am sure, be very pleasant for all the parties concerned. I have some interest in this clever young lady, and should be happy to help her in the way you propose. But I am hardly so sanguine as you."

"More in the style of Captain Shilly-Shally," said the other, with a burst of genuine enjoyment. He was, in truth, delighted to see that "no harm had been done."

The concert proceeded to its close. Mr. Doughty was the most painstaking of hosts, though many people remarked the old "dryness," which, in an elderly man, would be pronounced cantankerousness. To compliments and congratulations he answered, with a half-sarcastic tolerance, "that it was very good of them to be so entertained by his exertions." Had not his protégée, Miss Corinna, excelled herself? He hoped, by-and-bye, they would all be hearing her in a very different area from that poor room. Her noble voice would fill an opera-house. Now for supper.

Lady Duke was the greatest lady there. So the host came to "take her in." He approached her as she sat, the centre of an obsequious group. "We must go in to supper," he said. "But, first, where's mademoiselle? Ah! There's some pretty interesting work going on there. Master Alfred will have something to tell you when he gets home to-night."

Lady Duke looked a little alarmed at these public compliments. "Alfred was always fond of flirting," she said.

"Oh," he answered, gravely, "this is no flirtation. Miss Corinna is a person who must not be trifled with in that style. Her disposition is too noble, too much out of the common, for such treatment. Ah! Here they come. Mr. Duke, take in Miss Corinna to supper."

Every one standing round was listening with some surprise. No one was so mystified as the young hero, Mr. Alfred Duke. He expected bitterness, mortification, and spite.

During the supper Mr. Doughty enchanted all the ladies about him with what they called his "dry wit." He was unsparing in his criticisms. Miss Duke, who had contrived to get next to him, was convulsed with laughter.

"I must have some strange powers of entertaining," he said, looking at the young lady at the close of one of these appreciative bursts, "that has suddenly developed itself. Indeed, I have noticed that whatever I say always tells—that is, within the last few weeks."

Will Gardiner struck in with his usual noisy indiscreetness.

"We all remarked that it has not been telling in one quarter to-night, Doughty. How is that?"

Mr. Doughty looked at Lady Duke, then over at the pair, who were silent enough. "I am one of those good-natured people who hope to make their friends happy. Things are going very fairly, I think, and after to-night we may at least hope——"

Lady Duke turned pale. Will Gardiner burst into one of his favourite roars. He was delighted with this new turn, and his anxiety was now relieved. He at once took the cue, and for the rest of the supper the table echoed with his rough jests, his congratulations and praises of the "happy pair," as he called them, with many an "Oh, you are very deep, Doughty. I vow he took me in." About one o'clock the party broke up, and went home. When the sound of clattering carriages had died away the owner of the place was left alone in the great waste of his great music-room, alone with the long and disordered piles of chairs, and the music and instruments scattered about. After all those sounds there was a stillness. A sort of fury came into his face.

"Befooled and deceived again," he said aloud, as he literally stamped to and fro. "Are these smooth-faced women all demons, that they lay themselves out to play with our wretched hearts? Why could she not leave me in peace to my music, without seeking to make me her plaything, show me off to the people here as one full of a childish infatuation? She has only used me to lead on that creature whom she loves, and, as I stand here, I shall mark it to her and hers. She shall be left as deserted as she has left me!"

CHAPTER XVII. A WARNING.

ALFRED DUKE had, in truth, a strange and secret dislike to the cold and rather mysterious being whose guest he had been, who seemed to gauge perfectly all the uncertainties of his weak soul, and actually to be acquainted with all the crooked passages and little cabins of his mind. There was a jealousy and awe mixed up with these feelings, and when the element of wealth was added there came a sense of his rival's superiority which seemed to gnaw at his very heart. This gentleman was so accustomed to have his own way in the world, to be petted by the young damsels with whom he consorted in garrison towns, that this opposition annoyed him exceedingly. It must be again said that, if not actually "in love" with Corinna, he had a violent inclination towards that young person, such as gentlemen of the garrison often experience for the young

ladies of the district where they are quartered.

He was walking down to the club, very proud of his last night's proceedings, and of the victory he had gained, of which, no doubt, all the ladies in the place were talking, or would be talking, on that day. After all, they would see that wealth did not always carry the day, and that the cold, crabbed fellow, with his owl-like airs of wisdom and giving advice, had, in measurable phrase, been "holed." The matchless Corinna understood the difference between mere vulgar attractions of money and the wealth of youth and grace, which he possessed. As he indulged in these thoughts he felt some one touch his shoulder.

"My dear Duke," said Mr. Doughty, for it was he, "will you let me ask you a question? Do you ever make up your mind on a particular matter?"

The other looked at him haughtily. "Make up my mind? Perhaps I do; perhaps I don't. Why do you ask?"

"Not very satisfactory as an answer. But I really wish you would in reference to one matter. You have given a deal of trouble and anxiety in one quarter, and have disturbed a poor family, who are in a sphere far below yours. Is this fair; is it honourable; is it becoming a gentleman?"

The other started up. "Really, Mr. Doughty, you are a sort of relation of ours, but I do not think you are privileged to address me in this style. What are my proceedings to you?"

"I am not to be offended," said the other, coolly; "and having come here to speak plainly and candidly, I shall do so. All I wish is, that matters should be explained clearly and definitely. You had a great triumph last night at my house. Every one—and there were two hundred people there—saw the honoured preference that you received. I am sure you deserved it. I have heard this morning that it is considered certain that you have won the affections of Miss Nagle, that you have made a conquest."

A curious twinkle of pride came into the young man's eyes. This was the happiest flattery conceivable. The other went on:

"As for me, an humble and distant admirer of her talents and beauty, I was completely distanced—literally nowhere. If I had any humble pretensions, they were effectually extinguished."

"Really?" said Mr. Duke, complacently. "Well, after all, you see, money is not the chief thing in the world. Girls are not

always ready to sell themselves. But surely, my good Mr. Doughty, you could not have seriously thought that a fine, handsome, brilliant girl like that would have wished to sacrifice her affections, even for your handsome fortune. Girls will be girls, you know, just as boys will be boys."

"No doubt," said the other. "And I am delighted to hear this from you. Now, has it occurred to you that this grand triumph of yours, at which you are smiling so pleasantly, may have been obtained at the expense of a poor girl—at the result of her mortification and unhappiness. You may prevent her obtaining one who would really love and cherish her, and place her in a situation of comfort, where she would not have to work for her bread, while you offer her in return the trumpery and trifling solace of your royal preference, which will neither support her nor shield her from mortification, nor provide for her, but, on the contrary, only leave her wretched, disappointed, deserted, and her whole life blighted. This noble and gallant course, I am sure, is not what you propose."

At this burst of what was almost eloquence, declaimed with a warmth and passion that contrasted strangely with the cold temperament of the speaker, Mr. Duke was confused and confounded. After a while he recovered himself.

"I am not to be driven into a corner in this way, and brought to book by you or any one else. What right have you to assume that I have any such intentions? I allow no man to cross-examine me in this style."

"No right in the world," said Mr. Doughty, calmly, "beyond the interest we both have in the young lady. You will admit that regard for her justifies a great deal. She must not be sacrificed. Are you ashamed—as indeed I suspect you are—of having your august name coupled with hers, and are the people here to know that you mean nothing by these attentions? What must we tell her, too, for it is only fair she should know. Come, be a man, be honourable and straightforward. Have some generosity for this poor loving heart, who has sacrificed you know how much for you. Leave me out of the case."

"Indeed," said the other, with a sort of

triumph. "So this accounts for your bitterness. She was not to be tempted by gold!"

"You are welcome to that assumption if it pleases you, provided you engage to take some distinct course. Either come forward and make her your wife, in spite of all, for I know she loves you, or leave this place, and leave her."

"And leave the coast clear for you. Thank you. I am not bound to shape my conduct at any one's bidding, or to choose any particular course because you desire it. I may do what you desire, or I may not. I must decline to give any information on the subject."

"That is enough, more than enough. I shall be more communicative than you. Take a friendly warning. I venture to say that I know the course you have decided on, which is not a manly one. The thought in your mind is not that of marrying this music-master's daughter. With your pride of family, you would disdain to stoop so low, though she is infinitely above you. Now mark me. I look on you as unworthy of her, but still she likes you, and that is sufficient. From this moment every resource I possess, and such mental power as I have, which is more than you may give me credit for, will be devoted to this set purpose—to make you declare yourself, and force you to carry out what you have engaged to do, or, if this be not your view, drive you away at once from her side, and for ever, as I would some noxious animal. Mind, this is not said in anger or in spite. As sure as you stand there, it will be done. For you are weaker than I am."

Mr. Doughty made Alfred a bow, and, with a pleasant smile on his face, left him to reflect on this strange warning.

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